

City Currents

Summer 2016



From the Mayor's Desk

Mayor Susan Sample



As the City of West University Place gears up for the 2016 Atlantic hurricane season beginning June 1, public safety personnel are now better prepared for what is forecasted to be another active hurricane season. That is because of the recent addition of SR1, the City's new high water response vehicle. Acquired to expand our comprehensive emergency management program, this addition was a needed improvement to our response capabilities during extreme weather events.

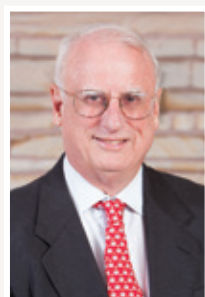
As shown in the Presidential Disaster Declarations issued for Harris County after the floods in May 2015 and again in October of 2015, heavy rains can quickly put a damper on the mobility of public safety personnel. During the flooding downpours that occurred in October 2015, the Fire Department needed to transport a patient after a motor vehicle accident, but the City ambulance was unable to do so due to high water. This confirmed the City's need for a suitable vehicle to not only respond to emergency calls during extreme weather events but also to transport people out of flood waters when needed.



The Fire Department purchased SR1 through the Texas Facilities Commission Federal Surplus Program in December 2015. The total cost to acquire, paint and outfit this vehicle for use was only \$15,000; \$10,000 came in the form of a donation from a very generous West U resident who wishes to remain anonymous.



SR1 was response ready as of March 1, 2016, and was called to duty during the April 2016 extreme rainfall, which was considered the worst the region has experienced since Tropical Storm Allison in 2001. During the April storm, SR1 responded to several fire-related incidents and affected 10 water rescues as motorists became stranded in the flood waters; the vehicle proved very effective and had no issues navigating the high water. By using SR1 during these events rather than fire trucks, the City may even save on the expensive vehicle repairs that are common after driving through flood waters.



**From Council
Member
Burt Ballanfant**

The recent flooding in Harris County again alerted West U residents to an historic concern about flooding in the southwest area of the county and Houston. Over the years I have often said that West U benefits from the backgrounds and expertise of its citizens. There are many engineers, construction professionals and individuals employed in the corporate or government sector who give us a relatively unique grasp of long-range planning. The past 20 years in the City of West University Place mark a time during which West U identified the necessity to undertake a rebuilding of its infrastructure, which represented a significant cost to the city as a whole.

The City of West University Place set out a priority schedule, which was ultimately implemented ahead of schedule. An important benefit of this West U infrastructure work came as the City of Houston concurrently set out to deal with flooding issues raised by Rice University, Rice Village merchants and residential homeowners, saying it would initiate a project to build culverts under Kirby Drive to alleviate flooding. Upon that announcement, West U approached the City of Houston, which then agreed that they would be willing to partner with West U to attach its new and expanded storm sewer (20 ft by 22 ft from Kirby Drive to Belmont) to the City of Houston's new and enlarged Kirby Drive culvert. The result of these two projects working together created fundamentally sound drainage relief that promises to benefit a significant number of West U residents, as well as the City of Houston residents and businesses east of Kirby Drive.

Subsequently West U, Southside Place, Houston, and the Harris County Flood Control District have worked together to address drainage in the southwest sector of West U, which was implemented in a one-year project.

Proof of this project's engineering success was demonstrated in greatly reduced flooding levels following the record-breaking 2015 Memorial Day floods and recent torrential rains in April.

Rain will always be with us, but West U citizens will always strive to be prepared.

Summer Water Conservation Be Prepared!

Where has the time gone? Already it is June, and the next thing you know it will be August, and the temperatures will be HOT!!! And the days will be DRY!!! Or that is how the summer normally goes, sometimes hotter and sometimes dryer. One thing is for certain: we will be watching our yards and gardens to be sure everything is surviving.

We also need to watch our water bills, or our pocketbooks will be hurting. Now is a good time to get the yard irrigation system checked out and make sure it is working properly, not only to be sure that the plants survive but also to check for leaks that will drive the water bill up. If you prefer to check the irrigation system yourself, go to your control panel and, after reading the instructions for your particular device, set the system to *manual run*. Then inspect each zone thoroughly. A good inspection will involve walking through the yard area where the sprinklers are running (be prepared to get wet!) and look for water coming up where it should not be. Also, look for water squirting from broken heads and water going anywhere other than the grass or garden. If you have a problem with the system and do not know how to repair it, I recommend calling an irrigation company.

As always, we should also take a look at other potential high water users like toilets and dripping faucets. Dripping faucets are easy to spot, but a leaking toilet may be a bit more difficult. To verify that a toilet is not leaking can be very simple, however.

To check for leaks in toilets, take these steps:

1. Be sure the toilet has been flushed and has completed filling.
2. Get some food coloring (I prefer red).
3. Remove the lid from the tank on the back of the toilet; it should easily lift away. Be careful, though; if you drop it, it will break.
4. A visual check will confirm that the water level is not higher than the overflow tube near the center of the tank. Water should be an inch below the top of the overflow tube. The overflow tube is the round pipe sticking up.
5. Squeeze several drops of food coloring into the tank to make the water a good red color. Do not put the food coloring in the overflow tube; this will invalidate the test.
6. DO NOT FLUSH THE TOILET for five minutes.
7. If there is a leak, the red will seep into the toilet bowl and a pink color will develop, normally starting around the edges. The pink color indicates that there is a leak between the tank and the bowl, allowing water to be wasted.
8. If you detect a leak, you should call a plumber, or as my daughter does, call Dad.

Water Pollution Prevention Only Rain in the Drain

ONLY RAIN IN THE DRAIN. Well, we all know that is not true. After the recent extreme rainfalls it is obvious that everything that can move goes into the drain.

This brings out the more obvious need to use caution when we do anything out-of-doors. Everything from garbage bags to recyclable materials, along with boards and yard debris, is picked up by rainwater and moved to the storm drains. Sometimes these items go into the drains and find their way to our streams and bays. Sometimes they just plug the drains and add to the high water levels by preventing the rainwater from flowing naturally into the storm water basins.

There is also a less obvious list of items carried into the storm water drains. Fertilizers, weed control chemicals and pest control chemicals are also picked up by the rainwater and, along with oils and grease from our vehicles, take their turn at adding to the pollution in our water.

We should all be careful to make certain that we are always ready for a storm to clean our yards and streets, and be certain that it is not taking our litter and waste materials along with it. The City of West University Place is a clean city. The yards are mowed and everything is nice and pretty, for the most part. However, we can always improve our pollution prevention efforts. I recommend the following to everyone so that we do our part to keep the world clean:

- Pick up litter any time you find it, and never litter yourself.
- Put out garbage only at specified times, and if a storm is in the weather forecast, please do not place your garbage or debris at the curb overnight.
- Make sure that you or your yard maintenance people use yard maintenance chemicals as directed in the instructions by the manufacturer.
- Keep vehicles in good running condition and have oil drips fixed as soon as they are noticed.
- Put items away when not using them; this prevents them from floating away and filling storm water inlets and waterways.

I hope you all have a wonderful and clean summer, and that you find at least one thing to help make the world just a little cleaner, and remember...

ONLY RAIN IN THE DRAIN



Parks and Recreation

Friends of West U Parks



October 1–2 is the weekend for the big 10th anniversary of the highly anticipated family campout known throughout our community and beyond. Since its inaugural year in 2007, the campout has become instrumental in raising

funds for the continued improvement and development of West U parks. This event will honor Jennifer Gatto and Daryl and Aaron Hoover, who co-chaired the first Fathers & Flashlights campout. Campers can look forward to an afternoon of fun activities such as live catch-and-release fishing, pony rides, an obstacle course and much more. Thank you to Friends underwriters, sponsors and in-kind donors who make this event possible. Kelly and Sean Butler, Kristine and Joaquin Martinez, and Kara and Curt Schaefer return for a second consecutive year as the event co-chairs for 2016. “We are excited to have these amazing couples back

to co-chair one of the neighborhood’s most popular events,” says Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond. Registration for the campout will be online only. To be eligible to participate in the event as a camper, you must be zoned to attend West University Elementary School, or be an underwriter or sponsor at qualifying levels. Returning 2015 camper registration will be online in August; the date will be announced soon. New camper registration will also be online. Registration details will be emailed out and available on the Friends website, www.westuparks.org. To receive any Fathers & Flashlights and other Friends emails, please visit the Friends website and sign up to receive the newsletter. If you have received emails in the past from Friends and your email address has changed, please call the Friends office at (713) 662-7430 or email Donna LaMond at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov.



Friends Star Citizen Awards were presented at the May 11 Friends board meeting and annual appreciation luncheon held at Cyclone Anaya’s in Rice Village. Awards were presented to Judy and Comfort Cheng and Michele and Paul Marvin for co-chairing the Park Lovers’ Ball 2016 held in February, raising over \$380,000 for our parks. Donna LaMond, West U resident and Friends Executive Director, also received a Star Citizen Award for her 14 plus years of service. Mayor Susan Sample presented the awards.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, February 18, 2017 when we will celebrate 26 years of the Park Lovers’ Ball. It will be held at the Hilton Americas-Houston and co-chaired by Peyton and Alex Popp and Sami and Jud Morrison.

Friends fundraising continues year-round with the stork program to announce new arrivals, community and business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please visit the Friends website, www.westuparks.org, call (713) 662-7430, or stop by the Friends of West U Parks office located in the West U Rec Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd.

Facility Maintenance

The West University Place Recreation Center will be closed August 28 through September 5 for annual maintenance.

West U Recreation Center swimming pool users may use the UTHealth Auxiliary Enterprises Recreation Center swimming pool, located at 7779 Knight Road in Houston, during the closure per our exchange agreement. You must show your valid West U Rec Center Membership Card for entry. Log onto www.uthouston.edu/recreation-center, or call (713) 500-8420 for hours and updated pool schedule information. Please note this exchange is for pool and locker room use and is not valid for weight room, cardio room, racquetball courts or other areas of use.

During the closure, those interested may call or visit Colonial Park Pool to sign up for classes, make tennis/racquetball/pavilion reservations, purchase memberships or get general Parks and Recreation information. Recreation Center staff will be temporarily relocated on-site at Colonial Park Pool, 4130 Byron, to conduct day-to-day business during the closure week.

The West University Place Recreation Center will resume its normal operational schedule at noon on September 5.

For more information, please visit www.westutx.gov or call:

- West U Rec Center: (713) 662-7420 (this number will be rolled over to Colonial Park Pool during the closure week)
- Colonial Park Pool: (713) 662-7460

Fall 2016 Class Registration

Discover a new craft or polish a skill for great benefits without investing a lot of time or money. Most fall classes begin in September. They include dance, tennis, Pilates, yoga, swimming, gymnastics, CPR and so much more!

*Priority Registration

(for those currently enrolled in classes within the past 30 days)

Tuesday, July 26 – Monday, August 1

*online registration is not available

Resident Registration

Tuesday, August 2

Non-Resident Registration

Thursday, August 4

Complete your registration online (after August 1) at www.westutx.gov/reg or come by the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire, to sign up. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, personal checks, and cash are accepted. To view a copy of the fall "West U at Your Leisure" guide, visit www.westutx.gov/parks or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.

Senior Services

Boomer Jam Sessions: Calling All Musicians Between the Ages of 50 and 100!!

Did you miss your calling and now have the time and energy to devote to your music again? Come join others in the same situation. The object of the jam is to help you to get to the next level in musicianship, so that you can better play with the semi-pro and pro musicians at local venues. Practice sessions will have PA and electronic drums; please bring your own guitar, bass or keyboard, and associated amps. For additional information, please contact Chen Sun at (281) 804-6246 or the Community Building staff at (713) 662-5897. Intermediate and semi-pro musicians are particularly welcome. (This jam is inappropriate for beginners.)

RSVP carefully, be on time, and if unable to attend, please cancel. We need an accurate balance of musicians. (If a good West U band forms, West U Rec Center will offer the band a paid gig to launch their pro musician career!) This group is hoping to begin jams once a month on Thursdays between the hours of 5:00 – 7:00 pm.

Senior Benefits

Did you know if you are 65 years or older, you may qualify for the following senior benefits?

- Property tax exemption of \$613.81 for your city taxes
- A discount rate on your solid waste fees
- A discounted rate on your pet registrations
- A discounted rate on your Recreation Center membership
- A discounted rate on your senior programs fees at the Community Building
- A complimentary membership to Colonial Park Pool
- Complimentary senior transportation to and from medical appointments, banks, grocery store and more
- Complimentary AARP tax preparation
- Limited medical equipment, housed in the Community Building, is available on loan to seniors

If you would like to learn more about some of these benefits, please contact the Senior Services at (713) 662-5895.



Independence Day Bike Parade

Families and kids of all ages are invited to participate in the Independence Day Bike Parade on Monday, July 4. Decorate bicycles, tricycles and wagons! The parade lines up on University Boulevard in front of West U Elementary at 8:45 am. The parade begins promptly at 9:00 am, proceeding west on University, turning south on Academy, then heading west on Byron and ending at Colonial Park, 4130 Byron Street. There will be plenty of food, fun and festivities for everyone to enjoy. Games take place from 9:15 am – 12:00 pm at Colonial Park Pool. For more information, contact the Parks & Recreation Department at (713) 662-7420.

Members Only Dive-In Movie

Relax poolside while watching the movie *Inside Out* at Colonial Park Pool this summer. The pool will close at 7 pm on Saturday, July 22, and reopen from 7:30 – 9:30 pm for the special 2016 Colonial Park Pool Members Only Dive-In Movie. All attendees must have a current Colonial Park Pool membership in order to enter the facility. Like other Dive-In Movies, the whole family can enjoy the movie from either the grass or the pool, but unlike other Dive-In Movies, members have it all to themselves.

Dive-In Movie Series

Join us at Colonial Park Pool from 7:30 – 9:30 pm on August 5 and 19 for this year's Dive-In Movie Series. Enjoy a family-friendly movie from the grass or pool and grab a snack at the concessions stand. Admission to the movie will be complimentary, but if you or your children would like to enjoy the movie from the pool, regular pool admission fees do apply. For more information about scheduled movies, fees and event details, please visit www.westutx.gov/events or call Colonial Park Pool at (713) 662-7460 or the West U Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420.

Halloween Dash and Kids Fun Run

Register now for the 6th annual West U Halloween Dash and Kids Fun Run on Saturday, October 29, 2016. The Dash is a chip-timed 5K race through the beautiful tree-lined streets of West U. The Kids Fun Run is a non-competitive 1 mile run or walk. All fun run finishers will receive a medal. Proceeds from the event benefit the West U Parks and Recreation Department. You can register at www.westutx.gov/501/West-U-Halloween-Dash-and-Kids-Fun-Run.

Safety and Public Works

Bike Safety and Securing Property

The West University Place Police Department would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of a few preventive measures to take to increase personal safety and reduce the possibility of thefts during the summer months.

The first area of concern is that of *personal safety*. When out riding your bikes, please take the following safety precautions into consideration:

- Make sure your bike is in good mechanical condition (tires, brakes, chains, cables, lights, etc.) prior to hitting the road. If you are not comfortable with or knowledgeable in conducting these types of inspections, there are several good bike shops in the area with people who are trained and equipped to assist you.
- Always wear a properly fitted helmet and any other protective gear, such as gloves and proper footwear, which will help keep you protected in the event of a fall.
- Obey all traffic laws when traveling on the roadway (stop signs and signals), and always ensure all intersections are safe and clear prior to riding through them.
- Watch out for motorists on the roadway, and make sure they see you (make eye contact with them) before crossing out in front of them.
- Wear brightly colored clothing to be seen more easily by motorists sharing the roadway.

The second area of concern is that of *property theft*. Often times, when finishing up outdoor activities, we forget to put equipment safely back inside of the garage. Leaving these items out in the yard in front of your home makes them prime targets for criminals looking for an easy score.

Please consider the following tips in preventing such theft:

- Lock all of your outdoor equipment and bicycles inside of your garage or storage building when not using them.
- Ensure *ALL* doors leading into these areas are closed and locked when not in use. *(A majority of our bicycle and lawn equipment thefts are the result of open or unsecured garage doors.)* In short, lock it up.
- Take photographs and record the serial numbers of your equipment and bikes. Being able to provide us with this type of information at the time of a report greatly increases the possibility of recovering your property if it is later sold or if a law enforcement agency finds it.
- Be alert and always report suspicious activity to the police at the moment you observe it. Trust your instincts and call us if what you see seems to be out of the ordinary. *(Someone riding a bike and pushing another bike, someone riding or pushing a bike with flat tires or one covered in dust, late night noises coming out of your garage or that of your neighbors, someone loading lawn equipment into the back of a car or truck that does not appear to belong to your neighbor's or anyone else's lawn crew, or even late night street walkers that you do not recognize as living in your neighborhood are all good examples of reportable situations.)*



Bicycle Registration

For our Bicycle Registration Form, copy or paste the link below into your browser:

westutx.gov/FormCenter/Police-Department-5/City-of-West-University-Place-Bicycle-Re-61

For bicycle registration and other information about Police Department services, visit the Police Department website at westutx.gov/215/Police-Department.

Where do I recycle plastic bags and wraps? **NOT CURBSIDE!**

Where? Use store dropoff locations: HEB, Randall's, Whole Foods, Target, or Central Market; also use the Westpark Consumer Recycling Center. For additional locations and more information, visit plasticfilmrecycling.org.

What happens to the bags and film? The plastic bags and film are made into containers, pallets, new film and new bags. In addition, they are often combined with wood/lumber products to make composite deck "lumber."

Fact: Area residents consume over 1,900,000 plastic bags daily, and 80% end up in landfills or as litter.

Fact: 500 sq. ft. of composite decking contains 140,000 recycled plastic bags.

Fact: When these materials are (incorrectly) included with your blue bin recycling, they disrupt the sorting process and may even bring the sorting process to a complete halt.

Waste reduction tip: Substitute reusable bags/containers for single use bags. Reuse items when possible, e.g., use produce bags, zip-lock bags and newspaper sleeves for pet waste.



Recycle clean, dry plastic bags and film packaging



... and other film packages beyond these displayed items
if they have the how2recycle label.

DO NOT include with bags and film

Prewashed Salad Mix Bags

Paper

Candy Bags

Degradable Bags

Silica Packets

Rigid Plastic:

Tape

Rigid Foam or Peanuts

- Plastic Food Containers
- Plastic Bottles
- Hangers

Quick Yard Waste Recycling Guide

Please review the following to ensure you are complying with the City's yard waste collection requirements.

When is yard waste being collected?

Yard waste collection is scheduled once a week on your normal recycling collection day.

If your recycling is collected on:

Monday: Yard waste is collected on Mondays.
Tuesday: Yard waste is collected on Tuesdays.
Thursday: Yard waste is collected on Thursdays.
Friday: Yard waste is collected on Fridays.

What types of bags must be used for yard waste collection?



All yard waste is required to be bagged in either kraft paper bags or compostable plastic bags. Non-compostable bags are not accepted for yard waste collection and may be subject to special collection fees.

Please look to ensure your compostable plastic bags have one or both of these logos.



When will special collection fees apply?

Special collection fees may apply for one or more of the following reasons after multiple warnings:

- Yard waste is mixed with trash.
- Yard waste is found in a non-compostable bag.
- Yard waste is placed curbside on the incorrect day.
- Yard waste is placed out early/late.

Still have questions?

Please visit our website at www.westutx.gov/greenwaste for more information. You can also call us at (713) 662-5839 or email us at pwinfo@westutx.gov.

City Currents

A Newsletter for the citizens of
City of West University Place

Summer 2016



City of West University Place
3800 University Blvd.
West University Place, TX 77005

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CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

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Mayor Pro-Tem Bob Kelly
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CITY WEBSITE www.westutx.gov

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For questions and comments about *City Currents*,
contact Anna Evelyn at (713) 662-5812 or
aevelyn@westutx.gov.

Design by Minor Design

Pet Etiquette

Help your dog and our city stay safe by keeping your dog on a leash or in an enclosure at all times. Besides being the law, using a leash prevents your dog from running into traffic or accosting other pets, and it keeps other people safe from unwelcome interactions with your dog. Even in your front yard, the dog must be on a leash. While out walking, please be sure to clean up after your pet to avoid spreading disease and waste. You are also required to register your pet with the city's Animal Control Officer. The cost is \$20 for a lifetime registration. Bring a copy of the pet's rabies vaccination papers to the Public Works Building, 3826 Amherst, and fill out the registration form available there. You will receive a tag to keep as proof of registration. Put the tag along with the rabies tag on your pet's collar. Doing this will help Animal Control identify your pets should they leave your yard or become lost. Periodically make sure that all enclosures where your pets are kept are secure. For more information or to ask questions, please contact the Animal Control Officer at (713) 662-5831.



Access Your Water Usage Online

Customers of the City of West University Place Water Utility System now have online access to reports of the hourly water flow from their water meter. The NEW Water Consumer Connect Portal will allow customers to see when they are using water and, once they are familiar with the system, will allow them to determine how much water is used for various activities and so improve their water conservation efforts. The system does not allow for access to real-time water usage as the readings are imported to the database each night at midnight. Customers should be able to see the flow from part of the previous day and all of the two days before that, along with historic flow; most meter records go back to June of 2015.

Customers must register online at the Water Consumer Connect Portal site. A link is provided on the City's website at www.

westutx.gov; simply go to the website, access the Finance Department page and then click on the Automated Meter Reading link in the left-hand menu. The link for the Water Consumer Connect Portal is at the bottom of the page along with a link to the User Guide.

If you have problems registering for the site, please contact the Finance Department at (713) 662-5824 and ask for Utility Billing. You will need the most recent copy of your water bill to complete the registration process as the registration requires your account number and the dollar amount of your most recent bill. Enter amounts with numerals and the decimal point only. For example, enter 12.01 or, if you have a credit, -12.01; system will not recognize parentheses as indicators of a credit amount.

The Consumer Connect Portal is new and we anticipate a few bugs. Please be patient with us as we work through any issues that might occur.

